Completing Our Report on Cuba

The Revolution, As Seen Through The Eyes of Its Supporters, Still Commands Enthusiasm and Devotion

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Fresh Light on The Mystery of The Missiles

The only top leader I saw in my ten days in Havana was Armando Hart, the Minister of Education. But this energetic and devoted young man spoke only of the successful campaign against illiteracy and his mounting problems as more and more Cubans began to go to school, and to stay there for a higher education, all safely non-political topics. I did not succeed in talking with Prime Minister Castro or any other top leader capable of discussing foreign policy questions. Knowledgeable persons told me Fidel was going through an agonizing reappraisal in the wake of the missiles affair, that until he spoke on Jan. 2 no one knew what the new line would be, and that lesser men would hesitate to discuss such delicate matters. I found my old friends in Havana asking the same question about the missiles affair that I heard in Washington: why did Khrushchev put them into Cuba in the first place if he was so ready to take them out again? The consensus among reporters with whom I spoke—and these included men from Soviet bloc, uncommitted and Latin American countries—was that Khrushchev had made a mistake. Nobody spelled this out but obviously the mistake was to believe that he could get away with placing nuclear missiles in Cuba.

Cubans Satirical About Nikita

The removal of the missiles stirred anger among the Fidelistas, and I was told that Fidel had gone several times to the University to appeal to the students to be quiet. Cubans made up a little poem which went like this:

Nikita Nikita
Lo que se da
No se quita

i.e. Nikita, Nikita, what you gave, you can't take back. In the eyes of the Fidelistas, the purpose of the missiles was simply to deter an American attack; they turned against us our own favorite theory of deterrence. But if I had had a chance to talk with top leaders I could have raised the questions which did not occur to the ordinary Fidelista: Did the Cubans realize that these missiles could be quickly observed, that theirs would be soft bases which could fairly easily be put out of commission by conventional attack, that their presence in Cuba would make Cuba a first target in the event of war between U.S. and U.S.S.R., that the missiles would raise tension and increase risk? The political questions were as delicate as the military. The Russians had agreed to remove the missiles without consulting Castro. For a man—and a people—as sensitive about their national dignity, this was an affront. An island besieged by the U.S., and so dependent on the U.S.S.R., could hardly afford open discussion of such questions.

Now that Castro has made his long awaited speech of Jan. 2 and discussed the missiles affair, some illumination can be found by comparing the three versions now available, the Russian, the Chinese and the Cuban. Khrushchev's version, as set forth in his foreign policy address to the Supreme Soviet Dec. 12, was that the missiles were placed there at Cuba's request, for "exclusively humanitarian motives." Khrushchev said, "Our aim was only to defend Cuba." The U.S., he said, was trying "to export counter-revolution" and threatening Cuba with invasion. "We were confident," he said, "that this step" i.e. placing the missiles "would bring the aggressors to their senses." Realizing "that Cuba was not defenseless," they would be "compelled to change their plans" and "then the need for retaining rockets in Cuba would naturally disappear."

This was the kindergarten version. What if the U.S., once the missiles were removed, changed its plans again and invaded? If the Cubans were satisfied with this version, they would hardly have published the full text of Khrushchev in their press only to follow it up a few days later by printing first a partial and then the full text of the reply made by the

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On Betraying Revolutions

It has become a familiar charge in this country, particularly among those who vacation in Palm Beach, a stronghold of proletarian rectitude, that Castro has betrayed the Cuban Revolution and Jose Marti. Since returning from Cuba a number of items have made us wonder whether this was an isolated case of revolution-betrayal or an epidemic.

The right of revolution was asserted as a fundamental principle in the Declaration of Independence, and is applied in our policy toward Castro. But there seemed to be no great uproar back home when the Communist Party was convicted of refusing to register under a law which blacklists any party or publication found to be disseminating revolutionary ideas. Our First Amendment guarantees complete freedom of political expression. But nobody here seemed unduly upset when a handful of liberals couldn't even get themselves recognized on the opening day of Congress to make a motion for abolition of the Un-American Activities Committee. There was no wave of indignation a day later when the Senate Internal Security Committee, under Senator Dodd, put Pacifica Foundation in the pillory because it has been allowing full freedom of expression over its radio outlets and even permitted an ex-FBI man to criticize our secret police and its chief, J. Edgar Hoover, last Fall.

We're still waiting for the White House or the Attorney General to suggest, even off-the-record to a few trusted reporters, that such activities betray the American Revolution and Thomas Jefferson, much less to urge those elements in the Kennedy Administration secretly disaffected by undemocratic practices to arise and fight.

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Chinese in the Peking *People's Daily* Dec. 15.

The Chinese were anxious to answer Khrushchev's charge that theirs was a policy of adventurism which might have plunged the whole world into thermonuclear war. The Chinese replied that while they were opposed to "the imperialist policy of nuclear blackmail," they also saw no need whatsoever for socialist countries to use nuclear weapons as chips in gambling or as a means of intimidation." This implied that the missiles were emplaced by the Russians as "chips" in a strategic game. "To do this," the Chinese said, "would really be committing the error of adventurism." They went on to say that "if one has blind faith in nuclear weapons" and "becomes scared out of one's wits by imperialist nuclear blackmail, one may possibly jump from one extreme to the other and commit the error of capitulationism." The Chinese said the Cubans had committed neither but implied the Russians were guilty of both. They quoted with approval Castro's statement that the way to peace "is not the way of sacrificing or infringing upon people's rights," a sideswipe at Khrushchev, and praised the Cubans because "far from being frightened by U.S. nuclear blackmail, they insisted on their five just demands."

A Puzzling Chinese Remark

This must have been music to Fidelista ears. The Chinese went on to make a puzzling remark. "The whole world knows," the Chinese said, "that we neither requested the introduction of nuclear weapons into Cuba nor obstructed the withdrawal of 'offensive' weapons from that country." For them, therefore, the Chinese concluded, "there can be no question whatsoever of 'adventurism', still less of 'plunging the whole world into a thermo-nuclear war'."

The Chinese have an influential Embassy in Havana. To say that they did not obstruct the removal of the missiles is to say that they did not advise the Cubans to resist the removal. That much seems clear. But why should they feel it necessary to say that they had never "requested" the placing of nuclear missiles in Cuba? No one assumed that they did. Castro's speech of Jan. 2 throws some light on this. He suggested that the emplacing of the missiles in Cuba had been requested by the Russians. "We agreed with the Soviet Union on the weapons which were set up here," Fidel said, "because we understood that we were fulfilling two obligations: one toward the country, fortifying its defenses in view of imperialist threats, and one obligation towards the peoples of the socialist camp." This contradicted Khrushchev's account. It implied that Castro allowed the missiles to be set up in Cuba not only to deter U.S. attack but also because he was persuaded that in doing so he would be fulfilling an obligation to the Soviet bloc. Was it to help right the Soviet missile gap by placing IRBM's in Cuba? Castro did not say. But this reference in his speech would help to explain what the Chinese meant when they said *they* had not requested the placing of missiles in Cuba, and then went on to call the emplacement "adventurism" and the swift removal "capitulationism."

No Word of Praise for Khrushchev

Castro in his speech of January 2 had no word of praise for Khrushchev. Castro did not say, as Khrushchev did, that with the U.S. no-invasion pledge, there was no further need of missiles to deter a U.S. attack. On the contrary Castro said that while "the Soviet government, in search of peace, arrived at certain agreements with the North American government" this did not mean that Cuba had renounced "the right to possess the weapons we deem proper and to take the international steps we deem pertinent as a sovereign country." He said over and over again that he did not believe U.S. pledges and he would not allow inspection. The Kremlin is not accustomed to such cooly independent language.

As for the Sino-Soviet struggle, Castro alone of all the Soviet leaders declared his neutrality between Moscow and Peking. This, too, is unheard of in the bloc. There personal rivalries have always taken on doctrinal forms, and questions of doctrine in turn have been debated in the intransigent tones of medieval theological dispute, in which the loser was doomed to be outcast as a heretic. Castro stood aside from this *furor theologicus*. In his January 2 speech the Cuban spoke of the split with sorrow. He said Cuba was forced to carry on its struggle for economic development in "a bitter situation" amid "discrepancies in the bosom of the socialist family." The very word chosen must raise eyebrows in Moscow *and* Peking. Castro could hardly have picked a weaker word than "discrepancies" for what they regard as a mortal quarrel. He said "we see with clarity here, from this trench 90 miles from the Yankee empire, how much cause for concern these discrepancies can be, how much unity is needed, how much all the strength of the entire socialist camp is needed to face up to these enemies." He announced that "the line of our people" was to be "to struggle for unity" in the socialist camp so that it could present "a united front to the imperialists." Unity "inside and outside" was his watchword. This neutralism in the Soviet cold war will be as unpalatable to Moscow and Peking as India's neutralism in our cold war has been to us.

How Peking Sees Cuba and The U.S.

"When Mao-Tse-tung enunciated his famous 'paper tiger' theory, he was not, of course, implying that the United States was harmless, but that it was not invincible and need not be feared. For power in Mao's eyes is not power if it does not have the 'spirit of the people' behind it. But there was another nuance to this 'paper tiger' concept which we usually miss—that power itself under certain circumstances is itself powerless. I think the Chinese would use Cuba as an excellent historical example of this. America, with all its prodigious military equipment and a navy that would dwarf all the other navies of the world combined, is confronted and challenged by 6,000,000 people on a puny island not one hundred miles from America's shores—and is unable to use her power against them. Here indeed, the Chinese would say, America has proved herself a paper tiger. America finds herself unable to deploy her massive military strength against the Cuban people because to do so would set off a chain reaction of revolution throughout Latin America."

—Felix Greene: China—The Country Americans Are Not Allowed to Know (1962 revised Ballantine paperbook edition originally published as Awakened China). We recommend it highly, along with Edgar Snow's Other Side of The River, as a vivid and sympathetic first hand account, the next best thing to a visit.

No Better Listening Post on Soviet Rumbles

There is no better place than Havana to listen in on the controversies shaking the bloc. I did not speak with Chinese but I did speak with Russians, Poles and Yugoslavs. They cannot dismiss the Sino-Soviet struggle as easily as Castro. For Castro the problem is to save unity so he can get help from both sides in his struggle against American strangulation. For these others the problem is more complex. "The Cubans wanted to join the bloc," one Yugoslav said bitterly, "to have its advantages but then did not wish to accept its obligations." He thought it sheer madness for the Cubans to expect the Russians to risk a thermonuclear confiict on their behalf. From the Yugoslav and Polish points of view, Castro fails to see that a Chinese victory would be the end of "different roads to socialism," and that Castro would be the first to find this unbearable. For Poles and Russians, the Cubans seem not to understand that while Khrushchev may be too cautious for their taste, his downfall would threaten the greater freedom within the Soviet bloc which followed the death of Stalin and the defeat of the Old Guard. In their opinion the very same Fidelistas who cheer China's "paper tiger" line would be the first to rebel if Chinese-style

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thought control were to be imposed on Cuba. As for the Russians, their friendliness for Cuba in no way interferes with their obvious desire for friendlier relations with the U.S.

These talks in Havana showed me that wherever American policy was to some degree flexible and pragmatic, rather than rigidly ideological, this paid off. The Yugoslavs, the Poles, the Russians—none took as dark a view of the possibilities of peaceful co-existence as the Cubans or the Chinese. This difference does not have its origin in theory but in experience. We treat communism as negotiable—everywhere but in Cuba and China. We have diplomatic relations with most of the bloc. We do some business with them. We have cultural exchanges. We even extend aid to two Communist countries, Yugoslavia and Poland. But China and Cuba are outside the pale. Is it any wonder that they, knowing only our rigid hostility, are rigidly hostile in return?

Cubans Faced The Crisis With Courage

One way to look at the recent crisis is that we were brought to the brink of thermonuclear war because we had driven an island neighbor so far into fear and enmity that it was willing to emplace nuclear missiles against us. We can be back on the brink again very easily by misjudging our relations with Cuba. From all I could learn, the events of that awful week-end when the world came so close to destruction brought Castro new support from among his own people, as the Russian threat once evoked support for Tito. People who had never volunteered before came out for militia service. Those foreign observers who were in the front line trenches when a U.S. attack was expected at any moment said they had never seen anything like it in their experience of war. "The sense of the people's courage," said one East European observer, "was a physical, tangible thing. You felt it in your skin and in your spine." Of course, he added, the Cubans have no conception of what a modern war, even a "conventional" one, would be like. "Everybody was running around with pistols, as in the Wild West," he said. "They did not realize that in a real war they might never see the enemy at all, much less engage in hand-to-hand combat with him." The Cubans are a brave people with a great tradition, fighting after a half century to complete a revolution we twice thwarted before, once when they defeated the Spaniards at the beginning of the century and again in 1933 after they overthrew Machado.

Like The Spirit in Israel's Greatest Days

A visit to Havana for any foreigner today is both frustrating and inspiring. Red tape and inefficiency are suffocating and in the middle echelons of the bureaucracy—the worst echelons everywhere—one meets officials who seem to arrive late and leave early and devote themselves in between to keeping up the morale of the cigar industry by smoking their way gloriously through the revolution. Appointments are made and broken in the most maddening fashion. Petty officials drag out the simplest tasks to magnify their own sense of importance. One finds in oneself a sudden sympathy with the "imperialists" who have to do business in these Latin lands of a *mañana* that rarely comes. But then one encounters a very different type of official, some young guerrilla soldier turned administrator, whose sobriety and devotion are at once apparent. I was often reminded at such moments of the best *chaverim* (comrades) whom I had known in Israel in the greatest days of its struggle. Indeed Castro's Cuba often recalled Israel, in the courage of its people in the face of such great odds, and in the spirit of the Fidelistas. There is no way of knowing what portion of the Cuban people are with Fidel but everyone with whom I spoke felt that his support was substantial. The spirit of the Fidelistas is difficult to explain to persons like ourselves who live in a stable society, indeed a society which often seems stalemated at dead center. For the Fidelistas—and they are particularly strong among the youth and the Negroes—the Revolution is still in its first uncorrupted phase. For them the experience is like love. They live in a springtime of mankind when words which have grown overblown and empty elsewhere become meaningful—love of country, devotion, selflessness, readiness to sacrifice one's life for others, the joy of struggling to end misery and to build a better society. How speak of these things to the jaded intellectuals of Washington?

Elsewhere youth has turned beatnik in the shadow of the mushroom cloud. In Cuba the same youth still *believes*. A whole new generation of technicians, scientists, doctors and engineers are being developed from them to replace those who have fled. The best and most promising youth are being brought in as *becados*—50,000 of them—given scholarships (*becas*) and stipends to make it possible for them to study. It was the holiday season and I was unable to talk with them. But a girl who is teaching some of the pre-medical students English spoke glowingly of their enthusiasm and devotion.

Jailed Americans Better Treated

"On Jan. 5, the Swiss Ambassador and two other officers of the Swiss Embassy in Havana, acting on behalf of the U.S. Government, visited the American citizens imprisoned on the Isle of Pines, Cuba. According to the Swiss report of the visit, the men have been quartered since Dec. 28 in a large wing of the prison, the address of which is Pavilion 2, Salon A, Recluserio Nacional, Nueva Gerona, Isla de Pinos. They have the use of a larger interior courtyard where they are now able to exercise in the fresh air. The new quarters have running water, good sanitary facilities, showers and beds. The prisoners told the Swiss representatives the guards are treating them well, and that they are now getting more food. The Swiss observed that the prisoners' health had improved and was in general satisfactory. Their morale also is reported as good. The Swiss found the prisoners' condition much better than on their previous visit, stating that their attitude was calm and dignified and advising their families not to worry."

—State Dept. Release No. 15, Jan. 9, 1963.

The First Air-Conditioned Revolution

Without hope, faith and charity, Castro's Cuba cannot be understood. We underestimate its grass roots strength and we overestimate its difficulties. A Britisher who had gone through the London blitz, a Pole who had seen his country forced to make a revolution in a land levelled by war and depopulated by Nazism, a Yugoslav who knows at first hand what the Partisans went through, a Russian who had seen war in all its appalling fury—such observers told me they regarded the Cuban revolution as a de luxe affair, the standard of living as extraordinarily high, the food supply as phenomenal for a country undergoing so fundamental a revolution against the will of so powerful a neighbor. It is, thanks to the kind of buildings we Yankee Imperialists left behind, the world's first air conditioned revolution. They keep the air conditioning on even in December when it is hardly needed. It is also, thanks to the existence of a huge Soviet bloc, getting a level of aid from abroad such as no other revolution has ever enjoyed. An American engineer who spent a lifetime in the automotive industry in Detroit and is now running a Cuban government laboratory for products research and automation told me the machine tools being supplied by the bloc are of very good quality. He said even a country like North Korea, so recently levelled by war, is sending Cuba first class milling machinery. "They may be short of consumer goods," he told me, "but the task of supplying capital equipment and technicians for a country as small as this one is 'chicken feed' for the Soviet bloc." He is very optimistic about the future. He thinks Cuba will be growing its own food needs in three or four years and he says a geological survey has found not only many valuable metals

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No Milk in Havana's Hotels But Babies Get Theirs Daily

like cobalt but petroleum. If Cuba can supply its own oil and food, it will really be independent.

The true Fidelistas are a pleasure to talk with. One of them was the young soldier in charge of the new fishing port. When I told him the U.S. fears this will be a Soviet naval base, he said, "We are building this port in Havana. We are building a refrigerating plant, a canning plant, a fileting plant. You will be able to see for yourself that our purpose is fishing." Traditionally Cubans have paid little attention to the food potential of the seas around them. In other quarters I was told that Cuba hopes also to fish the little touched South Atlantic, that the Russians can fish the North Atlantic from their own bases but that for South Atlantic fisheries it will be advantageous to them to have fish processing and ship repair facilities in Cuba. Others spoke of the plans going forward for automation in the sugar fields. Part of the revolution's problems arises from its success rather than its failure. Labor is growing short. The hard work of cane cutting is not popular and peasants are no longer forced by hunger and misery to take on such back-breaking tasks. They are also eating more, and supplying the cities with less. My own impression in the shops was that price control and rationing were working fairly well, and there was more available than I had been led to believe. In everything the children come first. Milk was impossible to get in Havana's best hotels but a Mexican reporter told me of visiting a fishing village in Oriente where every morning a truck came over bad roads to deliver 28 litres of milk for the 28 babies. Those people in Havana with babies all told me they got their milk ration regularly. If Havana is poorer, the countryside is richer. And in the hotels at night one sees a whole new class of Negroes and mulattoes, the men in dinner jackets, the girls in new style half-bustle dresses, enjoying themselves where hitherto only the rich and the foreigner played. The sense of full racial equality and ease is one of the most pleasant experiences for the guilt-burdened white American in Castro's Cuba.

The Poorest Way to Make Policy

It was my sixth visit to Cuba—three times before and three times since the Revolution. I did not encounter enemies of the regime. I did not visit the prisons, or study the workings of the block system which is supposed to give the Castroites eyes and ears everywhere against the threat of sabotage and our CIA, but must work some injustice too. The Cuba I picture is a Cuba as it appears through friendly eyes. This, of course, is not the whole truth. A revolution is a complex phenomena, a tragic struggle to be fully grasped only when seen from many points of view with compassion for the exiles as well as the victors. But I believe it is dangerously misleading to make policy and form opinion, as we do back home, almost exclusively on the basis of hostile views. To look at Castro's Cuba only through the eyes of those who have fled, to concentrate on the negative aspects as our press does, to exaggerate these and even to falsify, is to make it almost impossible to fashion flexible and wise policy. For years we read in our press that the Russian Revolution and then the Chinese was on the verge of collapse. Every time we are confronted with a new revolution we take to the opium pipes of our own propaganda. Those who try to be objective or friendly are dismissed as dupes, and sometimes—as the Stalin years demonstrate—they were. But events have also shown that in the long run the dupes prove less misleading than the doped.

Announcement

In December the Weekly completed 10 years of publication. They were wonderful but gruelling years. The Weekly succeeded without ever appealing to readers for financial help because it was, on the editorial side, a one-man job, from writing to proofreading and on the business side except for the past year a one-woman job, my wife's. In December there also occurred a birthday which put me well beyond the age of consent. I cannot take the next ten years at the same pace. I am therefore turning the Weekly into a bi-weekly (this is what the Postoffice, Webster's to the contrary, calls an every-other-week publication). I hope on this less tense basis to be able to do a better and more thoughtful job, to get out of Washington oftener (particularly to Latin America, where the big storm is brewing) and to publish special supplements from time to time. We have absorbed repeated increases in all costs, including a 400 percent rise in 2d class mail rates, over the past ten years without raising our $5 price, and with further mail rate boosts in the offing, we are leaving the subscription rate at $5. *The newsstand price goes to 20 cents.* Regretfully but hopefully,

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